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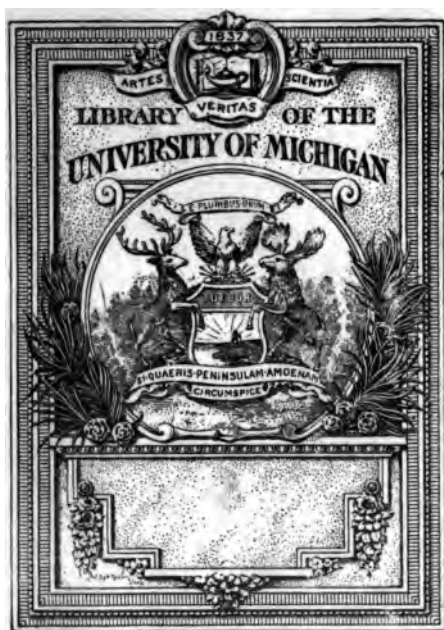
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PRINCIPLES AND METHOD
IN THE STUDY OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

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PRINCIPLES AND METHOD
IN THE STUDY OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE

by

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Pupil-Teachers' Centre, Beckenham, Kent

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PREFACE

THESE chapters are written primarily from a teacher's point of view. I have here attempted to state the logical and psychological principles that underlie the study of English Literature, and to illustrate methods of teaching that follow naturally from them. The essay is written with special reference to the mental growth and requirements of pupils in secondary schools; but in so far as the methods indicated are logically based upon the fundamental nature of the subject-matter taught, they are capable of being applied, in their essence, to the teaching of English Literature at all stages: I therefore venture to hope that the essay may be of interest to teachers of every grade. No attempt has been made to deal with the study of English as a whole: principles and method are described in their application only to the reading of authors. From an immediately practical standpoint, my chief aim has been to show how English Literature, as it appears in the works of our best writers, may be effectively studied and rightly appreciated. This is a theme of wide interest; and

I trust that the book may prove helpful not only to teachers, but to readers generally who seek guidance in the study of English Literature.

I desire to express my obligations to the Editor of *The Journal of Education*, who has kindly permitted me to make use of these two articles contributed by me to his columns: "The Psychologic Basis of Literary Study in Schools" (*The Journal of Education*, No. 441, Vol. 37); "The Place of Lyric Poetry in the Teaching of English Literature" (*id.*, No. 442, Vol. 37).

W. M.

BECKENHAM, KENT,
July, 1908.

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CHAPTER I.

THE LOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF LITERARY STUDY IN SCHOOLS.

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THERE are two fundamental points of view—the logical and the psychological—from which it is necessary that a teacher should regard the particular branch of study which he professes.

When it is said that the teacher should regard his subject from the logical point of view, it is meant that he should possess an adequate and coherent knowledge of its content and nature; and this involves a conscious recognition and logical classification of the distinctive elements that constitute his subject as an organised system and branch of study. The value to the teacher of such an orderly and arranged view of his subject is that it indicates to him the general directions that his teaching should take, and the results that he may hope to achieve.

When it is said that the teacher should regard his subject from the psychological point of view, it is meant that he should consider it not merely as a body of logically formulated and discriminated material, not merely as a surveyed and arranged result, but as

material resulting from mental processes which, in a modified form, must be reproduced in the pupil's experience: he must consider his subject-matter not in itself, as an abstract and self-contained thing, but in relation to the pupil, as a factor in the pupil's growing experience. He must have studied not only the particular branch of knowledge that he professes, but the general stages of growth in the development of mind. The value to the teacher of this point of view is that it will guide him in the application of suitable methods of teaching, and enable him to vary them according to the particular stage of development of his pupils.

The logical point of view furnishes a firm basis of procedure: it imparts to teaching that stability and authority which results from the teacher's adequate and coherent knowledge of his subject and its possibilities. The psychological point of view modifies the rigidity that would characterise a method based on a purely logical consideration of the subject-matter: it secures that flexibility and practicability which is characteristic of sound method.

The two points of view are not opposed to one another: rather each presupposes and is necessary to the other. While the logical point of view considers a fixed result, the psychological point of view considers the process that produces the result; but a complete understanding of the result necessitates the study of it in relation to the process that leads to it; and a complete understanding of the process necessitates the study of it in the light of the result to which it leads. The teacher's knowledge of his subject-matter, then, is not weakened and distracted, but, on the contrary, is

strengthened and unified, by the consideration of it from this two-fold point of view.

There are three aspects of Literature which govern any logical conception of it as a subject of study: we may look at it from the standpoint of its matter or content, and from the standpoint of its form, and from the standpoint of its imaginative atmosphere. In an abstract way these three aspects may be considered separately; but in actual literature they are never found apart, and they are essentially interconnected.

When logically analysed, the essential nature of the subject-matter or content of literature is found to be that it should deal with living reality, with some aspect or aspects of the universe which shall appeal to the reader as being real and vital. Literature includes within its scope the whole of experience—life in all its fulness and variety—the experience of all the people who have lived or might have lived or may live: there is no event, no state of mind, no phase of life which, treated in the appropriate manner, may not form part of its subject-matter. It is from this close relationship of literature to life that, for the ordinary reader, the chief interest and attraction of literature proceeds; and for the literary critic also this relationship is of the first importance. In the volume entitled *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style*, Mr Walter Pater has pointed out that the distinction between great art and good art depends immediately, “as regards literature at all events, not on its form, but on the matter.....It is on the quality of the matter it informs or controls, its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in

it, that the greatness of literary art depends, as *The Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost*, *Les Misérables*, *The English Bible*, are great art." A literary critic may be absorbed in observing and commenting upon features of diction and style; but his observations and comments will be valueless if he does not recognise that these features must be judged, not abstractly, in themselves, but in their relation to truth, in so far as they reflect life and reality. Thus Sainte-Beuve said: "I hold very little to literary opinions. Literary opinions hold very little place in my life and in my thoughts. What does occupy me seriously is life itself and the object of it." And again: "there is one word," said Maurice de Guérin, "which is the God of my imagination, the tyrant, I ought rather to say, that fascinates it, lures it onward, gives it work to do without ceasing, and will finally carry it I know not where; the word *life*."

The consideration of the formal aspect of literature as a subject of study may be said to include within its scope in the first place the structural form, and in the second place the language and diction, of literary works.

We have seen that the subject-matter of literature, dealing as it does with all the aspects of life, is varied, but at the same time the essence of it—its close relationship to life and reality—is always the same. So too the structural form of literature is varied: it differs in the lyric, in narrative and in epic poetry, in the drama, and in the novel; yet the essence of it is always one, and, when logically analysed, it is found to lie in the suitable adaptation of means to an end. In the producing of a work of art the artist's mind is dominated, consciously or sub-consciously, by an artistic

end or purpose which moulds the work as a whole and in each of its parts. "In literary as in all other art," says Mr Walter Pater, in his *Essay on Style* (*op. cit.*), "structure is all-important, felt, or painfully missed, everywhere—that architectural conception of work which foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does but, with undiminished vigour, unfold and justify the first." And this "literary architecture, if it is to be rich and expressive, involves not only foresight of the end in the beginning, but also development or growth of design in the process of execution, with many irregularities, surprises, and after-thoughts; the contingent as well as the necessary being subsumed under the unity of the whole."

Again, if we consider the form of literature in relation to the diction and language employed, the choice of words and the build of sentences and paragraphs, we find that here also the essential underlying principle is the adaptation of means to ends. The form of a literary work, alike in its general architectural design and in the details of language and diction, is moulded by, and must be essentially adapted to, the nature of its subject-matter. Thus if a poet had chosen for his theme events and deeds of a lofty nature, embodying the thought of an epoch or breathing the aspirations of a people, his work would fall naturally into the epic form. On the other hand, if he wished to express a single thought, his work would assume naturally such a rigidly limited poetic form as the sonnet. So too the diction of literature is moulded by its subject-matter:

the essence of literary diction is its adaptation of means to ends, its fitness and appropriateness as a means of expressing the subject-matter: in the highest literature the word and the idea are fused and united with absolute justice: the right word, the happy phrase, is struck out in the mind of the writer from contact with reality, as naturally as a spark of fire is struck from a flint. The varieties of literary diction are many: it may be clear, simple, idiomatic, involved, rugged, colloquial, learned, terse, quaint, polished, ornate; but it must always be marked by the essential quality of fitness and truth.

The third element in literature which helps to form our logical conception of it as a subject of study is the element of imaginative atmosphere. Every work of creative literature is permeated by a distinctive imaginative atmosphere. The artist's temperament and all his past experience have woven a variously coloured tissue through which he sees the world as bathed in a variety of distinct and blending hues—the charmed hues of imagination and fancy. The varieties of imaginative atmosphere, as found in creative literature, are innumerable; and as it is the most refined and subtle expression of temperament and personality there is in it an incalculable element that cannot be analysed. Yet the general essence of it may be discovered, and it is always the same: like the essential principle underlying the outward form of literature, it too consists in the adaptation of means to an end, worked out here in obedience to a fine sense of aesthetic fitness and harmony. This sense of fitness will lead the artist to select this imaginative element, and to reject that, as

being appropriate or inappropriate to his purpose; and the result will be unity of atmosphere. Just as the outward form of a literary work must be marked by unity in the midst of difference, by the harmonious adjustment of the different parts in relation to the whole, so too its inward spirit, its atmosphere, must be marked by harmony. And this harmony of atmosphere is not independent of the adaptation of means to ends in structure and diction: if there be no unity of form and little appropriateness of diction in a literary work there can be no unity of atmosphere. The nature of the subject-matter must be reflected throughout in the appropriate structure and diction and imaginative atmosphere. The three aspects of literature as a subject of study—its content, its form, and its appeal to the imagination—must always be considered as being in close and necessary relation to one another.

It has been said above that the subject-matter of literature is life and reality; and from this truth the teacher may draw the most important inference that the study of literature on the side of its subject-matter may be made valuable and interesting at *all* stages of the curriculum. It is sometimes asserted that literary study is of value to only a limited number of pupils, to those who are naturally gifted with an artistic temperament. But as we are all interested, or capable of interest, in life, so we are all capable of being interested in the study of literature from the side of its subject-matter. Art has been defined generally as being "an expression, satisfying and abiding, of the zest of life¹"; and this is true in the sense that every artist in his

¹ *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, by George Gissing.

work must be inspired by "supreme enjoyment of some aspect of the world about him." But by such enjoyment everyone of us—even the lowest intelligence—is from time to time inspired; and whenever we experience this enjoyment—if we look upon a landscape and keenly feel its beauty, when we see amid a crowd a face that interests us and stirs us to a sense of what is in man, whenever in any way a spark of intimate thought or real feeling is struck in us by immediate contact with the world—we are then moved by an impulse which is essentially artistic, because inspired directly by life. In this sense, and with the limitation that few are gifted with the capacity for artistic expression, we all possess "the artistic temperament"; and it may be added that in the teaching of literature, if proper methods be adopted, the human interest of the study may be made to appeal to all our pupils, from the youngest to the oldest. Viewed from the standpoint of its subject-matter, the essential function of literature is to enlarge the scope of our ideas and sympathies, to enrich and develop our human nature, to teach us to see and appreciate rightly "the varied spectacle and drama of life"; and it is this function that gives to the study of literature universal validity, a firm standing at all stages of the curriculum.

A further important inference which the teacher may draw from the nature of the subject-matter of literature is that the study of it, as dealing with life and reality, is calculated not only to create and foster in the pupil a theoretic interest in life and its manifestations, but also to teach him how to live—it has

a distinct ethical value. Here we touch upon a wide question, the complete discussion of which would involve an examination of the fundamental principles that determine the relation generally of Art to Ethics. Into such a general discussion it is no part of our present task to enter; but a few necessary conclusions which have an important bearing on the teaching of literature may be briefly stated. In the first place, it seems obvious that into literature, the subject-matter of which is as wide as the universe and life, an ethical element must necessarily enter. This will be generally admitted; but it may be asserted, on the principle of "Art for Art's Sake," that the ethical element in literature is essentially irrelevant and should be for the educated critic a negligible quantity. To this it may be replied that the teacher is concerned not with the trained critic but with the immature student; nevertheless, apart from this consideration, and from the standpoint of method, it is important that we should form some idea of the meaning and value that belongs to this principle of "Art for Art's sake." Since all literature may be regarded as an imitation of life, the principle cannot mean that literature is indifferent to moral distinctions: these exist in the universe, and therefore they must be reflected in literature. From the teacher's point of view, an important truth that would seem to be contained in the principle is the negative truth that the end of literature, as of all art, is not consciously ethical: its aim is not consciously to teach or preach. Understood to that effect, the principle indicates a valuable maxim of method: the subject of literature belongs not to the domain of

Ethics but to that of Art, and so soon as it is used deliberately as a means of teaching morality the teacher has passed beyond his proper vocation and ceased to be a teacher of literature as literature. At the same time, the ethical element is always present in his subject-matter, and as there presented cannot but influence the minds and characters of his pupils. "Literature," says Mr John Morley¹, "consists of all the books—and they are not so many—where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attraction of form. My notion of the literary student is one who through books explores the strange voyages of man's moral reason, the impulses of the human heart, the chances and changes that have overtaken human ideals of virtue and happiness, of conduct and manners, and the shifting fortunes of great conceptions of truth and virtue. Poets, dramatists, humorists, satirists, masters of fiction, the great preachers, the character-writers, the maxim-writers, the great political orators—they are all literature in so far as they teach us to know man and to know human nature. This is what makes literature, rightly sifted and selected and rightly studied, not the mere elegant trifling that it is so often and so erroneously supposed to be, but a proper instrument for a systematic training of the imagination and sympathies, and a genial and varied moral sensibility.....Literature is one of the instruments, and one of the most powerful instruments, for forming character, for giving us men and women armed with reason, braced by knowledge, clothed with steadfastness

¹ "On the Study of Literature," in *Studies in Literature* (Macmillan and Co.).

and courage, and inspired by that public spirit and public virtue of which it has been well said that they are the brightest ornaments of the mind of man."

The conception of the content of literature as being thus related to life will give the teacher a firm belief in his subject as being interesting and valuable to his pupils at all stages; but taken in this connexion certain psychological considerations are important. At every stage in the study of any subject, the selection and grading of material must be in line with the pupil's dominant directions of activity, and must not be determined merely from the logical point of view of the adult, with reference to the logically distinguished sections of a systematized subject of study. The pupil's experience of life has been small, and consequently care must be taken that the literature which he studies reflects such aspects of life as he is capable of understanding. The subject-matter that is read must be varied according to the stage of development of the pupil: if it be beyond his comprehension and range of sympathy the reading of it will be hopelessly barren and uninteresting alike to teacher and pupil. Thus from the age of eight to twelve the literature that is read should deal generally with the lighter and more cheerful aspects of life: it may tell a story or deal with action: the poetry that is studied should be musical: and always the diction should be clear and simple; on the other hand, whatever is gloomy or deeply reflective or passionate in tone, with whatever is obscure or complex in diction, should be avoided.

Coming now to the second aspect involved in a logical conception of literature as a subject of study,

we have to ask: is it possible for a pupil of school age to study the structural form of literary works, and, if this possibility be granted, at what stage of the curriculum should such study begin?

It has been remarked above that the essence of structure lies in its adaptation of means to an end: there can be no coherent structure in a literary work apart from the operation of a moulding and governing idea which shall underlie the whole work and each of its parts in relation to the whole: in other words, it is of the essence of literary structure that it should bear the marks of organisation and system. Now, this conception of system is one which can have no real meaning for pupils below the age of twelve or thirteen years: before it can be in any degree understood, a pupil must possess some power of reasoning continuously and connectedly, he must be able to grasp mentally different threads of reason and consequence, and perceive their interrelations in a coherent whole. In the earlier stages of mental development a child is satisfied with the mere play of bodily and mental activity, underlying which there is no conscious or explicit motive or end. Only by degrees there comes to the growing consciousness some sense of cause and effect, or of the connexion between a certain course of action and a certain result, with a perception of the possibility of more permanent and objective ends than have hitherto occupied the attention. With the gradual increase of power, it becomes possible for the mind to distinguish between the sphere of natural or physical causation and the sphere of human action and thought as determined by a purpose or end. And as the mental

development proceeds, there becomes possible the conception of a related system of cause and effect, of reason and consequence. When a pupil has reached the age of twelve or thirteen his powers of reasoning have developed sufficiently to enable him to comprehend relations of cause and effect, and the adaptation of means to an end, in a simple system. This indicates to the teacher that the study of structure in literature should not be begun before that age; and it affords to him a firm ground for believing that after that age the study of structure should form an essential part of the literary course. The movement of the intellect is instinctively onward towards coherence and system; and the study of structure in literature is one of the means by which that instinct may be satisfied and its development secured. If our teaching is to satisfy the nature of our pupils, from this time onwards we must offer a more systematic treatment of the subjects of study: we must emphasise wherever we can the relations of cause and effect, and the systematic adaptation of means to ends. In the later stages of the literature course, then, whatever be the particular class of literature that for the time being may constitute the object of study, be it poem or play, biography or essay or novel, the pupils should be required at suitable times to direct their attention to its structure, from the point of view of adaptation of means to ends: so that, after having read and considered it, they may be able to perceive it as a whole made up of parts skilfully arranged in such a manner as to produce the general effect at which the writer has aimed.

The circumstance that the essence of the form of

literature when regarded on the side of diction, no less than when regarded on the side of architectural design, is the adaptation of means to an end, a fine harmony between the reality that is expressed and the manner of its expression, indicates to us again that the formal study of literary diction should not be attempted in the junior classes. Speaking generally, the less verbal criticism there is in the earlier stages of literature teaching, the better and more effective will the teaching be; and at all stages of the teaching, whenever the details of language are considered, the teacher must consider these not in themselves, as isolated features, but in their relation to the matter that is expressed, or as producing a certain mental effect aimed at by the writer. All the details in a work of literary art are selected with a view to the attainment of an artistic end, and they should be studied in relation to that end. In a letter written to Mr R. H. Hutton with reference to her novel of *Romola*, George Eliot bears striking testimony to this fact. "Perhaps," she remarks, "even a judge so discerning as yourself could not infer from the artistic result how strict a self-control and selection were exercised in the presentation of details. I believe there is scarcely a phrase, an incident, an allusion, that did not gather its value to me from its supposed subservience to my main artistic objects."

It is frequently doubted whether pupils of school age are able to appreciate rightly the effect of imaginative atmosphere in literature. Even if a favourable view of the possibilities of literary study in schools be taken, and it be admitted that the pupil may be taught

to perceive the "intellectual" qualities of literature—for instance, the logical qualities of coherence and continuity in a poem or treatise or essay—yet, it is said, he can by no means be trained to appreciate its "imaginative" or "aesthetic" qualities—its appeal to the imagination and its beauty of expression or of feeling. From this point of view, while it is admitted that the pupil may be taught to perceive some of the more prosaic qualities of literature, it is urged that he can have no vision of it in its higher, more poetic aspects.

In opposition to these opinions, it may be maintained that through the study of literature not only the pupil's intellect, but also his imagination and feelings—his whole human nature—may be trained and developed; and that there is in the curriculum no other subject so well fitted to achieve this particular result.

When it is said that possibly the harder and more logical qualities of a literary work may be utilized in teaching, but that its imaginative and aesthetic qualities cannot; when it is said that the study of literature in schools may possibly be a means of training a boy's intellect but cannot cultivate his imagination—to say this is to commit the serious psychological error of making an abstract separation of "mental faculties" where no real separation exists. There is no concrete state of mind that consists merely of reasoning or merely of imagination or merely of feeling: though we may distinguish between different aspects of consciousness, yet they do not operate apart from one another—the mind is a unity. And in a work of literary art the intellectual, the imaginative, and the emotional elements

of human nature work in particularly close association and harmony: the artist puts *himself* into his work, himself considered not as a congeries of distinct "faculties," but as a whole-souled being, as compact of conception, of imagination, of feeling—each of his "faculties" being related to the other, and all blended and harmonized in the finished product of his art. No other subject included in the school curriculum presents the pupil with material that is so "rammed with life"—so penetrated and inspired by the united action of all our faculties; and it is just this close association in it of intellect, imagination, and feeling that constitutes the special value of literature as a school study.

Remembering this connexion, and the fact that our faculties do not operate apart from one another, we may feel sure that, if we succeed in conveying to a pupil a sense of the intellectual qualities of literature, of the coherence and order and restraint that characterise a work of art, at the same time we shall have succeeded in conveying to him a sense of its imaginative qualities and its aesthetic value.

In other words, in the teaching of literature the imagination and the aesthetic nature may be cultivated *through the intellect*.

It is impossible to describe briefly what the distinctive function of imagination in literature is; but perhaps the best description in general terms would be to say that its function is to inspire atmosphere—an appropriate medium in which the creations of the artist may live and move. Atmosphere, it may be said, is the very life-breath of all literature (and of all art), just as

it is of our material existence, and it may be admitted that only in so far as a pupil is inspired with the atmosphere of a book is the teaching of literature quite successful. If it be said that the imagination refuses to be coerced, and that therefore it is impossible to compel a pupil to breathe the atmosphere of literature, the reply may be made that in reality there exists no necessity for such compulsion; that just as, in the material world, given the necessary bodily organs, we cannot but breathe the atmosphere of the place in which we are, so, too, in the world of literature, given intellectual comprehension of the book that we are reading, we simply cannot help breathing its imaginative atmosphere.

It is the more special function of the intellect, in creative literature, to impart suitable form and design to a work, so that the exposition of its subject-matter may be marked by continuity, coherence, and unity. If a pupil shall have been led to perceive this unity of thought and structure in an imaginative work, he will have been brought a considerable way towards feeling the correspondent harmony of atmosphere.

Suppose, for instance, that a class is reading one of Shakespeare's plays, in all of which there appears the greatest complexity, while at the same time amid the diversity there is an underlying unity which serves as link of connexion throughout. This unity of thought a pupil should be brought to see in each of the details that it governs; it will be seen often in those details that apparently are most irrelevant to the main issue. Thus, in *As You Like It*, the lyrics with which the speeches are interspersed would seem, on a first view, to be quite unrelated to the main idea of the piece. Yet

they are not really so. Take the first verse of Amiens's song:

Blow, blow, thou winter wind !
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude ;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.
Heigh-ho ! sing heigh-ho ! unto the green holly :
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.
Then heigh-ho the holly !
This life is most jolly.

Than this lyric what could seem more spontaneous, purposeless, artless? Yet throughout it, appearing in each sentence, there runs a thought that is intimately connected with the "plot" of the play—the song, one may say, so far as its matter goes, being a commentary on the banishment of the Duke, a contrast of his former with his present condition. Now, a pupil who had been led to perceive this connexion, as regards its thought, of the song with the story, with the play as a whole, could not but feel—though perhaps quite unconsciously—how finely the atmosphere or spirit of the song accords with the atmosphere or spirit of the play: his imaginative and aesthetic nature as well as his intellect would be touched.

Suppose, again, that a class is about to study Goldsmith's poem, "The Deserted Village." By his own previous study, the teacher himself will have realized that the spirit of this poem is in many respects of an intimately personal kind, significant of the circumstances of the poet's life and the conditions of his character; and with these circumstances and conditions the pupils, if they are to breathe freely and fully of the atmosphere

of the "deserted village," must have previously been made acquainted: their imaginative and aesthetic nature may be reached through the understanding. As a step, then, preliminary to the reading of the poem, and taken with a view to inducing in the pupils the right mental state, the teacher may begin by describing, in an easy conversational manner, such circumstances of Goldsmith's life and character as find expression in the spirit of the poem. In the course of this narration the teacher will, wherever possible, quote by way of illustration any lines that may seem to him to breathe the essentially characteristic feeling of the poem. Goldsmith, as a boy, was educated at Lissoy, a small village in Ireland, with which the "deserted village" of which he writes has generally been identified. After he left Lissoy his life ran a somewhat troubled and erratic course. He was of a careless and improvident disposition, which frequently led him into financial difficulties. He tried various means of earning a livelihood, and at length settled down as a writer in London. While struggling to achieve success in his calling, in the midst of the bustle and noise of the London streets, he thinks with pleasure and longing of the quiet village where he had spent his boyhood. The thought of the peaceful beauty of its scenes, contrasted with the struggle and the squalid environment of his later life in London, stirs in him a wistful regret and a deeper sense of the simple pleasures of country life. Such illustrative lines as the following may be quoted:

In all my wand'rings round this world of care,
 In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
 I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
 Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down.

Or, again, the lines beginning

O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care, that never must be mine!

The poet's kind and generous nature and his own hard fight with poverty lead him to sympathise with the poor and lowly, and the poem is permeated with this feeling. The scenes and the characters with which Goldsmith had been familiar in his boyhood are drawn with a sympathetic touch. The teacher's first aim will be, by dwelling on these and kindred themes, to suggest to his pupils the mental atmosphere of the poem. The next step in the teaching will consist in detailed reading by the class, in the course of which the logical connexion and sequence of thought in the successive parts of the poem will be shown, and words and phrases will be explained with a view to making the ideas and images more clear and vivid. All through the teaching the direct appeal of the teacher is to the pupil's understanding; for, as has been remarked above, if a poem (or any work of art) is thoroughly understood by a class, its atmosphere or life-spirit will be breathed, and the highest aim of literature teaching as such will then have been realized.

When a reader breathes the imaginative spirit that suffuses a work of literary art, the mental result is the production of aesthetic pleasure. Now, a distinctive characteristic of aesthetic pleasure is its essential objectivity: that is to say, it is inherently related to the object which calls it forth. Before an object can produce aesthetic satisfaction, the mind must go through the intellectual process of perceiving it in certain relations. The teacher's task, then, in cultivating the pupil's

aesthetic sensibility, is to present the object in those relations which form the intellectual basis of its imaginative and aesthetic appeal: he must *intellectualise*, as it were, for the pupil, or objectify for him in its mental relations, the imaginative atmosphere of a literary work. It is only in this sense that there can be said to be any *teaching* of literature on its imaginative and aesthetic side. It is sometimes said that the exercise of the intellectual activities is likely to destroy emotion and kill aesthetic pleasure. But this is not so: so far from this being the case, an essential condition of aesthetic satisfaction is intellectual comprehension of the object which gives pleasure. The imagination and feelings are trained not directly—from the nature of the case such direct training would seem to be impossible—but indirectly, through the intellect. And no subject is so well adapted as is literature to the task of so training them, because there is no other subject in which the qualities of imagination and feeling together are so predominant, or where they are so closely interwoven with the intellectual fibre of the matter taught.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL METHOD.

THE first reading of a literary work in class should have for its main object the general comprehension of the subject-matter. The book should be read as rapidly as is consistent with adequate comprehension, in order that the subject-matter may present itself to the pupil as a continuous and connected whole. As the reading proceeds, the teacher will pause at convenient places, and ask such questions as may suggest to the pupils the essential meaning and relations of the successive passages. The questioning may be guided by three main considerations now to be kept uppermost in the pupils' minds. When incidents are being narrated, the important question to be considered is, "What is happening?" When objects are described, the question may take the form, "What is the pictorial effect produced, What do you see?" When ideas are stated, the question may be asked, "What is the meaning?" If a passage possesses a specially human interest, dealing with life in those of its spectacular or dramatic or moral aspects which the pupil is capable of understanding, the questioning may

aim at the illumination of the passage in those aspects: the pupil's interest in life may thus be brightened and deepened, and he may be induced to think and reason for himself regarding human character and motive. The study of a passage in literature with a view to the elucidation of its human interest may be said to correspond to an object-lesson in an elementary course, or an experimental lesson in physics or chemistry in a more advanced curriculum. It is an experiment in humanistic investigation, as the latter is in scientific investigation. Just as, after an experiment in physics or chemistry has been performed, a boy may be asked to explain the inferences to be drawn from it regarding the natural world, so in literary study he may be asked to explain, regarding the world of thought and feeling, the inferences to be drawn from a passage or "experiment" in literature. From the answers received the teacher will come to know his pupils more intimately, will be able to gauge more accurately their quickness of understanding and sympathy, their capacity for thought and feeling.

In addition to the oral work, written exercises (to be done either at home or in class) should be set. The pupils may be required at suitable intervals to summarize the content of the book, and, on the conclusion of the first reading, to write in as few words as possible an account of the essential theme set forth in the work as a whole. Suitable passages of poetry may be set for paraphrase; the meaning of pregnant prose sentences may be expressed more fully; and picturesque characters and scenes may be described in the pupil's own words.

Side by side with, and in close relation to, the study of the content, in the senior classes, the study of structure may proceed. The essence of literary structure is that it is marked by unity in difference, by the adaptation of means to the attainment of an artistic end. Different, though interrelated, phases of the subject under treatment may be presented: there may be a main theme, and a larger or smaller number of minor themes according to the greater or less complexity of the structure; and all these will be related to one another and to the whole scheme by an underlying artistic purpose. The teacher's object here is to secure that the pupil perceives the different aspects of the structure as distinct from one another, and also as related and unified in a complete whole. Thus, in a novel or a drama, the various threads of the plot are woven in the first portion of the work; and the teacher's questioning should enable the pupil to distinguish and describe these as they are introduced: at the end of a chapter or a scene the questions may be asked—With which thread of the plot is this chapter or scene mainly concerned? and: Is any other thread introduced, with a view to maintaining the reader's interest in it and keeping before his mind the interrelations of the various threads?

The structural form of a literary work may often be conveniently shown by a tabular scheme, the different parts of the structure being represented in parallel columns¹. Each column may be headed by a title which

¹ See *The Teaching of English in the Elementary and Secondary School*. By Percival Chubb. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905. Page 282.

shall express briefly the subject-matter of its section ; and the chief details to be included under it may be written below the title.

Scheme for the Study of Structure.

Theme (or Thread) 1	Theme (or Thread) 2	Theme (or Thread) 3

In such a tabular form the distinct development of the different aspects of the subject-matter will be clearly seen ; and at the end of the form there may be added a statement dealing with the interrelations of the sections.

The close connexion between content and structure in literature is thus made evident. The study of structural form cannot be carried on apart from the study of the subject-matter which is formulated by it ; nor can the content of literature be fully appreciated apart from the form which defines it.

It follows from this circumstance that in the senior classes—whenever the study of structure and a more adequate study of the content of literature are aimed at—the literary productions that are read should be complete in themselves, showing a developed artistic structure.

The question is often asked whether complete texts or selected passages should be read in class. The foregoing remarks carry with them the implication that after the age of 12 or 13 the use of incomplete selected passages should be avoided, since they afford no means for the more formal study of structure. In favour of the use of selections, however, something may be said so far as the junior classes are concerned. In these classes we cannot hope to gain for the pupils all that is to be derived from the study of literature: their attention is to be directed mainly to the content of what is read, and this may be done when selected passages are used. Indeed, it may be claimed that here selections possess an advantage over complete texts, in that a volume of good selections may reflect more varied aspects of life; and every teacher knows how necessary variety of subject-matter is in order that the interest of young pupils may be sustained. It may be held, then, that up to the age of 12 or 13 a volume of selections containing appropriate subject-matter, and including, in addition to extracts, a number of short poems and prose pieces individually forming complete wholes, is a suitable form of text-book.

After a book has been read with a view to the general comprehension of the subject-matter and structure, it may be re-read—this time with a view to the study of linguistic details and style.

The old method of studying our literary masterpieces in schools proceeded on the idea that they were to be used mainly as a means of imparting to pupils information relating to grammar, philology, or literary expression: the matter or content of literature was

neglected in favour of the study of formal details. Within the last few years there has set in a reaction against this mode of treatment, and the tendency of "the reformed method" is to emphasize the importance of studying the content of literary works. There can be no doubt that this tendency is in a right direction: as was remarked in the preceding chapter, the aim which gives validity to the teaching of literature at every stage of the curriculum is the humanizing and enriching of the pupil's nature, through the study of the subject-matter; and that aim cannot be realized if the masterpieces of literature are used merely, or chiefly, as a medium for instruction in grammatical, philological, or literary detail. At the same time, we must be careful to take from literature, in the successive stages of the curriculum, all that the study of it is able to give; and since after the age of 12 or 13 a pupil may profitably make some study of the subject on the side of structural form and language, we must not indiscriminately all through the curriculum direct our pupils' attention exclusively to the content. We shall be confirmed in this opinion if we reflect that the content of literature is vitally interconnected with its form, and cannot be fully considered apart from it.

One of the most important points on which the teacher has to decide is the amount of detailed formal treatment that should be given. This will be determined partly by the nature and form of the book that is being studied, and partly by the stage of development of the pupil. There are certain classes of literature—for example, the novel—that are not well adapted for the exposition of linguistic and literary details. On

the other hand, there are some works—as the dramas of Shakespeare—that are specially well adapted for such exposition. In classes of younger pupils the discussion of linguistic or literary details should be avoided. An important general principle which may guide the teacher in this matter is that detailed treatment is desirable whenever it will add materially to the meaning or force of a passage for the pupil. The formal features of language and style must be studied in their relation to the subject-matter and the artistic objects of the writer: when they are so studied, they cease to be merely formal, and become pregnant with meaning and interest. For example, Milton frequently employs words in unusual senses according to the meaning of the Latin or other words from which they are derived (e.g. “horrid” = bristling, in “a horrid front,” *Paradise Lost*, I. 563); in such case the derivations of the words should be explained as throwing light on the meaning. Again, if a class were reading Tennyson’s *Coming of Arthur*, and came to the words:

And on the spike that split the mother’s heart
Spitting the child,

the teacher might first ask what classes of vowel and consonant sounds predominate in the words; and he would then proceed to ask what mental effect is produced by their use. If, in the reading of these lines, a pupil were made to feel the impression of short and sharp action produced by the succession of short vowel sounds and sharp consonant sounds, his appreciation of the content and force of the passage would be greatly heightened. Similarly, the content of these lines from *The Lotos-Eaters*—

Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?

would be enlarged for the pupil if he felt that the repetition of the word "climbing" suggests a sense of repeated effort and continuous toil, opposed to the idea of peace mentioned in the first line.

Throughout the second reading of a literary work, the pupils should be required as far as possible to discover for themselves the significance of the linguistic or literary details selected for comment. The method of teaching literature should be largely heuristic; and this being so, it is desirable in most cases that the textbooks used in class should contain few "notes." The typical old-fashioned school-edition of an English author was, like Hamlet's marriage tables, "coldly furnished forth" with stale fragments of grammatical and philological information. Much of this information, regarded in the light of the principle that only such details should be selected for notice as will add to the meaning or the artistic conception of a passage, is seen to be misplaced and superfluous; and for the remainder, much of the material that is thus supplied by the editor may more profitably be acquired by the pupil's own researches.

The oral work connected with the detailed study may be supplemented by written exercises mainly revisional in character. At intervals, after a certain amount of ground has been covered, written answers may be required which will summarize the significant details that have been studied. For example, an exercise might be set on the words that had been commented upon in the reading of a certain number of

pages. The pupil would be asked to write down, with adequate references to pages or lines, such features as obsolete words, words that have changed in meaning, derivations, explanations of meaning, or any other verbal characteristics that might have been noticed in the course of the class-teaching.

Notes on Words.

Meanings	Words changed in meaning	Derivations	Obsolete words	Page, etc.

Another exercise might have for its subject the figures of speech that had been commented upon in class.

Notes on Figures of Speech.

Similes	Metaphors	Antithesis	Climax	Exclama- tion	Page, etc.

Other exercises might deal with grammatical peculiarities, or with metrical characteristics, or with allusions and their explanations. The writing of such

exercises enables the pupil to make and classify his own notes, which, as thus formulated, will be infinitely more valuable to him than similar notes that he might find supplied in a text-book.

Before the second reading in class is begun, the teacher should ask himself two questions, the answers to which will determine to a large extent the course of his later teaching. In the first place, he should ask himself: What is the main theme of the book? The answer given to this question will guide him in the selection of the literary details to be noted in the course of the second reading. The diction and tone of particular passages will be remarked when they are in harmony with, or show in a clearer light, the content and artistic aims of the book. The second question to be asked is: What is the essential spirit or atmosphere of the book? The answer given will guide the teacher in the selection of details to which the pupils' attention must be called in order that they may appreciate rightly the imaginative atmosphere of the book.

The effect of atmosphere in a literary work, when it is regarded intellectually and objectively (as it must be so far as practical teaching is concerned), is in many instances seen to be produced gradually through an accumulation of suitable details which are selected, consciously or sub-consciously, in obedience to the writer's artistic sense. It is the teacher's business so to present these details to the pupil's intellect as to assist him to recreate imaginatively for himself the characteristic atmosphere of the book. Suppose, for example, that a class were reading Shakespeare's *As*

You Like It. This play is marked by a fresh joyousness of spirit: it is an idyll of forest-life, full of the feeling of the open air and nature. The scene is the Forest of Arden, where the banished Duke and a many merry men with him live the free woodland life, and fleet the time carelessly, "as they did in the golden world." The fresh, young spirit of this golden world is breathed throughout, and finds expression in many touches. The allusions to the places and things seen in the forest help to create and maintain the illusion of out-of-door life. We read of the lioness, the snake, and the deer that inhabit the forest-glades. The sequestered stag seeks shelter near "an oak whose antique root peeps out upon the brook." Rosalind's cottage is "at the tuft of olives here hard by." The similes and metaphors that occur are frequently drawn from the analogy of woodland sights. Adversity is like the toad, which, "ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head." Orlando, when Adam offers to serve him, compares himself to a rotten tree—

That cannot so much as a blossom yield
In lieu of all thy pains and husbandry.

Adam's age is "as a lusty winter, frosty but kindly." When Orlando demands food from the Duke, he compares himself to a doe seeking food for its fawn. Silvius says that his mistress's love is like a harvest, of which he would be a humble gleaner—

So holy and so perfect is my love,
And I in such a poverty of grace,
That I shall think it a most plenteous crop
To glean the broken ears after the man
That the main harvest reaps.

By a succession of such allusions a certain effect of atmosphere is created; and, if the pupil is made to perceive the relation of these details to the writer's artistic objects, he will be assisted to feel more keenly the imaginative charm of the comedy. So far as pupils of school age are concerned, the study of style and atmosphere must be carried on by reference to such concrete details as we have exemplified. Vague generalities, unsupported by details, regarding style and atmosphere, have no meaning or reality for young pupils. In the senior classes, however, at the conclusion of the second reading, pupils may be asked to describe generally the literary qualities of the work: its tone may be characterized as earnest, exalted, dreamy, flippant, cynical, cheerful, grave, melancholy, humorous, witty, pathetic; its diction as being simple, colloquial, elevated, polished, ornate, smooth, strong, or terse; or its style as being clear, direct, concise, or obscure and verbose; and always the literary qualities noted would be illustrated by particular examples taken from the book, and the appropriateness of the diction, style, and tone to the nature of the subject-matter and the writer's artistic objects would be shown.

The usefulness of the comparative method in the study of literature is now, so far as the literary critic is concerned, generally recognised. It is indeed a method that is indispensable to the work of criticism. Matthew Arnold, in his *Essays on Criticism*¹, remarks that in order to recognise the spirit of true poetry, we must study the writings of the great masters: we must know their finest lines and expressions, "and apply them as a

¹ Second series: *The Study of Poetry*.

touchstone to other poetry"—a few such passages, "if we have tact and can use them, are enough even of themselves to keep clear and sound our judgments about poetry, to save us from fallacious estimates of it, to conduct us to a real estimate." Speaking more generally, Mr C. E. Vaughan says that "without reference, express or implied, to other types of genius or to other ways of treatment, it is impossible for criticism to take a single step in definition either of an author, or a movement, or a form of art....It is the highest achievement of modern criticism to have brought science and order into the comparative method, and largely to have widened its scope. In this sense, comparison *is* criticism; and to compare with increased intelligence, with a clearer consciousness of the end in view, is to reform criticism itself, to make it a keener weapon and more effective for its purpose¹."

While the value of the comparative method in criticism is thus recognised, it cannot be said that, up to this time, its due place has been accorded it in the teaching of literature. The chief use that has been made of it hitherto has been in the presenting of parallel passages. This has valuable results, but a much wider use of the comparative method may be made: it may be applied to the interpretation not only of particular passages, but of literary works as wholes. Thus we may compare and contrast two works belonging to the same department of literature and written by one writer, but treating of different themes: for instance, two tragedies or two comedies of Shakespeare, two of Tennyson's

¹ *English Literary Criticism: with an Introduction by C. E. Vaughan.* London: Blackie and Son, 1896.

lyrics, two of Macaulay's essays, two of Scott's novels. Or we may compare and contrast two works belonging to the same department of literature but written by different writers and dealing with different themes: as an essay of Addison and an essay of Lamb, a comedy of Shakespeare and a comedy of Sheridan, a novel of Thackeray and a novel of Dickens. Or again, we may compare and contrast two works belonging to the same department of literature and dealing with the same or a similar subject, but written by different authors: for instance, Macaulay's essay on Addison and Thackeray's essay on the same subject.

The comparative method may be applied to literature in each of its aspects, to its subject-matter as well as its structural form and style; but it gives perhaps its most valuable results when it is used in the study of style. A sense of style may be best acquired by the comparison of works similar in kind but different in treatment. Examples illustrating various applications of the comparative method to literary works considered as wholes will be given in the following chapters. Here the method may be briefly illustrated by a contrast between the following short passages, which resemble one another generally in theme but differ widely in treatment:

- (a) A mighty mass of brick and smoke and shipping,
Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye
Could reach—with here and there a sail just skipping
In sight—then lost amidst the forestry
Of masts;—a wilderness of steeples peeping
On tip-toe through their sea-coal canopy;
A huge dun cupola, like a foolscap crown
On a fool's head—and there is London town!

BYRON.

(b) SONNET COMPOSED ON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE IN
EARLY MORNING.

Earth has not anything to show more fair :
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty.
The city now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the field and to the sky,
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep,
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

WORDSWORTH.

Pupils may be asked to contrast, from the points of view of thought, tone, and language respectively, the pictures of London given in the above passages¹. The contrast may be set down either in parallel columns or in the regular form of a theme.

TWO DESCRIPTIONS OF LONDON.

A CONTRAST.

1. *In Thought.*

(a) Byron's stanza emphasizes the squalid aspects of London. The place is "a mighty mass of brick and smoke," "dirty and dusky." The steeples that peep through the canopy of smoke are like a dreary "wilderness."

(a) Wordsworth's sonnet emphasizes the brightness and beauty of the scene. "Earth has not anything to show more fair." The sun has just risen, and the buildings sleep in its calm light, "all bright and glittering in the smokeless air."

¹ This example is taken from *Composition for Schools and Colleges*, by C. H. Maxwell, B.A. Meiklejohn and Holden, 1904. P. 134.

(b) Byron's stanza does not reflect spiritual and moral impressions, but merely the external aspect of the city.

(b) Wordsworth indicates the spiritual mood which the scene created. "Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!" "Dull would he be of soul who could pass by A sight so touching in its majesty."

2. In Tone.

The tone of Byron's stanza is light and flippant, in harmony with the external and material aspects of the thought.

The tone of Wordsworth's poem is earnest and exalted, in harmony with the more spiritual aspect of the thought.

3. In Language and Style.

(a) The diction of Byron's stanza is not essentially poetic, but it is plain, direct, and effective. It expresses a picture in a few broad strokes. It is marked by a certain quality of conciseness and even of abruptness.

(a) The diction of Wordsworth's sonnet is essentially poetic. Inversion occurs in lines 2, 9, and 11, and the archaic forms "doth" and "glideth" may be noted. The style is smoother and more sequent than that of Byron's stanza.

(b) The figure of Personification is found throughout the stanza, but it is used in a semi-ironical manner. A sail "skips" into sight; the steeples "peep on tip-toe"; and London itself is personified as a fool wearing a "foolscap crown." Metaphor and Simile occur: such phrases as "the forestry of masts," "a wilderness of steeples," "like a foolscap crown on a fool's head," add to the conciseness and picturesqueness of the diction.

(b) Personification, Metaphor, and Simile are here used to produce vividness and poetic effect. The city, clothed in the beauty of the morning, is like a man wearing a beautiful garment. The sun and the river are endowed with the attributes of persons. The houses "seem asleep" in the sunshine.

(c) The verse is iambic pentameter, and flows lightly and

(c) The poem is written in regular sonnet-form. The open-

briskly. The easy flow of the stanza is aided by the extra-metrical syllable at the end of lines 1, 3, and 5. Line 7 is irregular. The closing couplet gives a pointed finish.

ing trochees of lines 2, 9, and 11 impart a vigorous impetus, and add emphasis to the expression. Line 6 contains six accents, and, to counterbalance, line 7 (which begins with two trochees) contains only four accents.

CHAPTER III.

THE STUDY OF FICTION.

EVERY production of creative literature may be studied in relation to its content, structural form, diction, style and imaginative atmosphere. At the same time, the different kinds of literature vary in the relative value which they possess as enabling us to study these several aspects. Each form of literature, indeed, may be said to have its special place and function in class-instruction. Thus, while the novel, the narrative poem, the essay, the lyric, and the drama may all be used as means for the communication of certain general facts of language and style, each may also be used to do a special work which no other form can do so well.

The novel is at once the most characteristic and the most popular literary form of our time; and it is a form that is particularly well fitted to foster the interest of young pupils in the study of literature. Boys and girls are naturally fond of a story, and it is important that they should be taught to discriminate between the good and the bad in this form of writing: the prevalence of the "penny dreadful"

and the cheap novelette shows that there is need of such teaching in our schools.

Among the different forms of literature, prose fiction demonstrates more simply and clearly than any other the close relationship of literature to life. In the novel, the romance, and the short story, the human interest is obviously predominant: they represent character and action, and the interplay of each upon the other. The drama also, it is true, represents action and character; but for young people the study of these through the reading of drama is more difficult: for, while the novelist explains more explicitly and fully the situations and characters with which he is concerned, the dramatist affords the reader little or no assistance in the way of interpretation or comment. Therefore, in class-instruction, the first study of a drama naturally comes some time after the first study of a romance or novel or short story. It is through the study of these forms that a pupil is most likely to become interested in literature generally as a means of interpreting life, and they thus possess a special and radical value in the teaching of English Literature. A passage from one of Hazlitt's critical studies, referring to the essay in its more familiar forms, may be taken as describing aptly some of the benefits to be derived from the study of fiction. "It makes familiar with the world of men and women, records their actions, assigns their motives, exhibits their whims, characterizes their pursuits in all their singular and endless variety, ridicules their absurdities, exposes their inconsistencies, 'holds the mirror up to nature, and shows the very age and body of the time, its form and pressure'; takes minutes of our dress, air,

looks, words, thoughts, and actions ; shows us what we are, and what we are not ; plays the whole game of human life over before us, and by making us enlightened spectators of its many-coloured scenes, enables us (if possible) to become tolerably reasonable agents in the one in which we have to perform a part. 'The art and practic part of life is thus made the mistress of this theoretic.' It is the best and most natural course of study. It is in morals and manners what the experimental is in natural philosophy, as opposed to the dogmatical method. It does not deal in sweeping clauses of proscription or anathema, but in nice distinction and liberal constructions....It does not try to prove all black or all white as it wishes, but lays on the intermediate colours (and most of them not unpleasing ones), as it finds them blended with 'the web of our life, which is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.' It enquires what human life is and has been, to show what it ought to be. It follows it into courts and camps, into town and country, into rustic sports and learned disputations, into the various shades of prejudice or ignorance, of refinement or barbarism, into its private haunts or public pageants, into its weaknesses and littlenesses, its professions and its practices : before it pretends to distinguish right from wrong, or one thing from another. How, indeed, should it do otherwise ?

*Quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,—
Plenius et melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.*

'It tells what is honourable, what is base, what is expedient, more amply and better than Chrysippus and Crantor¹.'

¹ Hazlitt : "On the Periodical Essayists."

The ethical quality of fiction is indicated by a later essayist, Vernon Lee, in the following passage: "While fiction—let us say at once, the novel—falls short of absolute achievement on one side, it is able to achieve much more, something quite unknown to the rest of the arts, on the other; and while it evades some of the laws of the merely aesthetical, it becomes liable to another set of necessities, the necessities of ethics. The novel has less value in art, but more importance in life. Emotional and scientific art...trains us to feel and comprehend—that is to say, to live....The novelists have, by playing upon our emotions, immensely increased the sensitiveness, the richness, of this living keyboard¹."

Considered, again, as a product of art, fiction conforms to certain canons and conventions which should be studied. In the senior classes some attention should be devoted to the structure and artistic manipulation of the story. The "complication" and "disentanglement," the weaving and the unravelling of the threads of the plot, should be followed; and the use noted of such devices as suspense, climax, and contrast. The special and characteristic value of the novel in the teaching of English Literature is not only that, as has been remarked above, from it a pupil may derive a broader and keener interest in life and literature, but also that he may learn wherein the art of telling a story consists, and the qualities that mark a story as it is told by our best writers. And as a medium whereby the art of structure in fiction may be studied, the short story possesses advantages which longer narratives

¹ Vernon Lee "On Novels," in *Baldwin: being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations*.

do not possess. Just as, in poetry, the lyric poem, because of its brevity, enables a pupil to study its structure with less effort than do the longer forms of poetry¹; so here the structure of a short story may be more easily studied than that of a novel or romance: the plot is less complicated, and may be grasped as a whole at one reading and included in one view. Again, the study of short stories possesses the advantage that many varieties of narrative, differing in atmosphere and effect, may in a short space of time be studied consecutively and contrasted with one another.

Of the various forms of literature, fiction may be said to be the least of all adapted for giving instruction in grammatical and philological details, and in features of diction and style. Whether it be true or not that "the novel has less value in art, but more importance in life," it seems certain that for the teacher, at least, the primary consideration in the study of fiction should be its relation to life; and that relation is apt to be obscured if the pupil's attention is concentrated on grammatical or philological details. The treatment of fiction in class-teaching ought to be broad and rapid rather than detailed: at all stages it should deal with the content and structure rather than with linguistic and literary details, and always the human interest should rule paramount. It should be remembered, too, that in fiction questions of style and diction present themselves from a special point of view and should be so regarded. Thus such questions as the use of dialect, "local colour," descriptions of scenery, and the

¹ v. inf. Cap. V.

general style of the conversation, whether stiff and bookish or easy and natural—questions that do not so readily arise in the reading of other forms of literature—may here be studied.

One defect that commonly marks the mode of procedure adopted in the study of fiction is that much more time than is desirable or necessary is spent in the reading of a novel or romance in class. The book is read aloud, from beginning to end, by the pupils; and since usually a work of fiction is of considerable dimensions, and only one or two lessons a week can be set apart for the reading of it, often a whole year is occupied in the perusal of one book. There are many objections to such a mode of procedure. One of the aims which a teacher of literature sets before himself is to initiate his pupils in a fairly wide course of reading; and to the realization of this object the method under consideration certainly does not conduce. A further objection is that the method is unnatural and artificial. The mode of reading books in school should not be absolutely divorced from the mode in which books are read out of school; and, as it is a familiar experience that one is apt to lose interest in a novel the reading of which extends over a long period, so too in schools the perusal of a work of fiction should be fairly rapid: when it is extended over so long a period as a year, interest is likely to evaporate. Again, such a lengthened reading in class is unnecessary, because, if a suitable work shall have been selected, the majority of the pupils will on their own initiative read through it in a few weeks. And again, since, as has been remarked above, the novel is a form of literature which is not so well

adapted for the giving of instruction in minute details of language and style, the amount of time to be spent on detailed explanation is thereby lessened. For these reasons it may be concluded that to a great extent the actual reading of a novel should be done by the pupils outside of class-hours. The teacher's work should be directed towards securing, by proper guidance and help, that the pupils' reading is done intelligently. His first object will be to see that they follow coherently the gradual development of the plot and structure; he may afterwards direct their attention to the characters, and to the methods of characterization employed by the author; and lastly, if he thinks fit, he may discuss questions of diction and style.

The successive parts of the story may be prescribed to be read, out of school-hours, week by week, until the whole has been perused. At suitable intervals the pupils may be required to hand in a written exercise

Stevenson's "The Black Arrow."

PLOT AND STRUCTURE.

1. <i>The Black Arrow</i>	2. <i>Dick Shelton and Joanna Sedley</i>	3. <i>Sir Daniel and the Yorkists and Lancastrians</i>

that shall summarise briefly the course of the story. The different threads of the plot may be traced in parallel columns, mention being made in each column of the various events connected with one particular thread. For example, if Stevenson's *The Black Arrow* were being read, the exercise might appear with the following headings :—(1) The Black Arrow ; (2) Dick Shelton and Joanna Sedley ; (3) Sir Daniel and the Yorkists and Lancastrians. (See the scheme given on p. 45.) The first column would indicate the incidents in which the band of The Black Arrow takes part, the second the adventures of the hero and heroine, and the third the historical setting of the tale.

The reading of the story having been accomplished, a general review of the plot and structure may be made. Questions such as the following might be raised : How does the book derive its title ? Is the title suitable, and if so, why ? Is there any point at which the interest of the tale reaches its height ? At what stage precisely is the climax reached ? Are there any minor "climaxes" ? In *The Black Arrow* the climax is reached at the end of Book II. By that time the various threads of the plot have been interwoven ; and the remainder of the book shows the process of their unravelling. The hero, Dick Shelton, is engaged in two tasks : he is seeking to bring Sir Daniel Brackley to account for the murder of his father ; and he desires to marry Joanna Sedley. The first two Books of the story state the various events that lead up to the performance of these tasks. The mysterious murder of the hero's father, and Dick's consequent hostility to Sir Daniel, with his escape from the Moat-House, and his joining the band

of *The Black Arrow*, are the chief events connected with the first task. The detention of Joanna Sedley by Sir Daniel, and Dick's determination to rescue and marry her, are the chief points connected with the second task. In Book III the unravelling of the plot is commenced. The reader's interest is sustained by the unsuccessful result of the attempt to rescue Joanna. Book IV describes the frustration of the scheme to wed Joanna to Lord Shoreby. Book V brings Sir Daniel to his last account, and ends with the marriage of the hero and heroine. The title of the book is justified because of the important part which the fatal Black Arrow plays in the development of the plot. Lord Shoreby falls dead before the altar, pierced by the Black Arrow, when he is about to be wedded to Joanna; and thus there is removed an obstacle in the way of a happy issue. Later, Sir Daniel, as he stands face to face with Dick in the forest, is shot through the heart by the Black Arrow: the happiness of the hero and heroine is now secured, and the tale is told.

When the plot and structure of the narrative have been sufficiently studied, the pupils' attention should be directed to the characters. Here again the tabular form of exercise may be advantageously used. The pupils may be required to set down in parallel columns the names of the characters, the qualities that they display in thought and action, and the passages that may be quoted to illustrate these qualities. The headings of the different columns would then be: (1) Name, (2) Characterization, (3) Illustrations, (4) References. In the case of *The Black Arrow*, the exercise might be begun as follows:

Stevenson's "The Black Arrow."

THE CHARACTERS.

Name	Characterization	Illustrations	References
Sir Daniel Brackley	(1) Unscrupulous.	The murder of Dick's father. His compelling Sir Oliver Oates to perjure himself.	Prologue, &c. II. 2, "By the mass! but ye shall swear."
	(2) Avaricious.	"The Knight of Tunstall was one who never rested from money-getting." — "I have a need for the lad, for I would sell his marriage."	I. 1. II. 2.
	(3) Shifty and disloyal.	"I lie in Kettley until I have sure tidings of the war, and then ride to join me with the conquerors."	I. 1.
	(4) Courageous in battle, a good leader.	"Hisdash, his proved courage, his forethought for the soldiers' comfort," &c.	I. 1.

The method of characterization, and the author's success in depicting the persons, may also be studied. Questions such as the following would be asked: Does the author describe the characters in detail when he introduces them, and habitually comment on their mode of action, or rather does he make his comments brief and leave the reader to draw his own conclusions from the characters' speeches and actions? In other words, is the method of characterization, generally speaking,

analytic or dramatic? Are the characters life-like? Do they act consistently all through the narrative? Is there any tendency to exaggeration of certain traits?

After the characters, the style and diction of the book may be considered. What epithets might be applied to the style? Is it direct, animated, brilliant, artificial or dull, clear or confused? Is dialect used? Are archaic forms used, and, if so, with what object? Is "local colour" employed? Give examples of vividness of phrase or good passages of description. Is there any humour? Give instances. Is pathos a strong feature? Quote examples of pathetic passages.

It is a good plan to study successively novels that may be conveniently compared and contrasted. In one of the writer's classes the pupils read in succession Sir Conan Doyle's *Micah Clarke* and Sir Walter Scott's *Old Mortality*, romances which, while differing widely in treatment, yet possess certain similarities as regards their subject-matter. As the reading of the second book, *Old Mortality*, proceeded, the pupils' attention was directed to the resemblances and differences. Both books deal with rebellions against established authority: *Micah Clarke* with Monmouth's rebellion against James as representing Roman Catholicism, *Old Mortality* with the struggle of the Scottish Covenanters against the Royalist forces as representing Episcopacy. The two revolts were alike unsuccessful: in each of the tales the hero, after the defeat of his party, is compelled to leave the country, and goes abroad to serve as a soldier of fortune. While the story of *Micah Clarke*, however, ends at this point, in *Old Mortality* the narrative is continued after the hero has returned from exile to his

native land. This difference in the subject-matter corresponds with the greater complexity of structure that marks Scott's romance. The plot of *Micah Clarke* is simple, that of *Old Mortality* is complex. The former runs on a single thread which links together the adventures of one character—the hero—and his associates; the latter runs along two main threads, the first of which is connected with the fortunes of the hero, Henry Morton, and the Covenanters, while the second, running a distinct but parallel course throughout the greater part of the story, and uniting with the other only at the close, is connected with the fortunes of Edith Bellenden and the Episcopalians. In *Micah Clarke* there is practically no love-interest: it is purely a tale of adventure. In *Old Mortality* the main theme is the love-story of the hero and the heroine, and the hero's adventures are important chiefly in relation to that theme. Hence, while the former tale ends fittingly with Micah's departure from England, the latter is continued until the hero and heroine are brought together again and united. Structurally considered, *Micah Clarke* consists in a series of loosely connected chapters, each describing a separate adventure; while in *Old Mortality* the various incidents are connected with one another by a central unifying theme. Corresponding with the greater complexity of its subject-matter and structure, there is found in Scott's romance a greater range and complexity of characterization. In *Micah Clarke* the characters are nearly all fighting men and burghers: there are very few female characters, and those that do appear are merely sketched, not fully drawn. Scott's characters are taken from all classes,

and his delineation of the Scottish peasantry, male and female, is especially vivid. The character of Henry Morton is much richer and more complex than that of Micah Clarke, and it develops fresh qualities as the story proceeds. Scott's Sergeant Bothwell and Conan Doyle's Decimus Saxon are both soldiers of fortune ; but, while the latter is merely a soldier of fortune, a brave fighter with an eye ever to his own advantage, the former is shown as possessing qualities of heart which, despite his roughness of manner, endear him to the reader. A comparison of the two works leads to the general conclusion that the canvas of *Old Mortality* is wider in scope, and more varied in life and colour and atmosphere, than that of the later romance.

CHAPTER IV.

STUDY OF THE ESSAY.

THE characteristic function and place of the Essay in the teaching of English literature is defined by the circumstance that, of all the forms of literature, it is the most nearly related to the study of Composition. One of the most common exercises in English Composition consists in the writing of "essays"; and while these are not usually so long as the essays studied in the literature class, their composition is similar, and should be governed by the same general principles. As a form of literature, the essay is more within the creative powers of the pupil himself, more like what he himself is able to produce; and therefore, to a greater extent than the other forms of literature, it should be considered by the teacher with reference to the possibilities of its use as a model in composition.

An essay should first be read with a view to the discovery of its main theme and the author's particular point of view. A distinctive characteristic of the essay is that, in the treatment of the main theme, the writer selects such ideas or facts as are appropriate to a single point of view, and states these to the exclusion of others that may be quite as essentially connected with the subject. The art of discriminative selection

is here especially operant, fundamentally important though it is in all the forms of composition; and through this form it may be most effectively studied. In this connexion, however, it is to be noted that in the more personal, intimate kind of essay-writing digressions from the main theme are permissible, and frequently occur. For example, in Charles Lamb's essay entitled "My First Play," the first paragraph introduces the main subject, pointing out to the reader the pit entrance to old Drury, where Lamb saw his first play; the second paragraph describes—somewhat discursively, but still relevantly to the main theme—the author's "godfather F.," who had sent the orders for the theatre; the third paragraph is digressive, and comments in Elia's kindly humorous manner on some of F.'s personal peculiarities; the fourth paragraph is again digressive, suggesting Lamb's feelings when he first set foot on a landed property left him by his godfather; the fifth paragraph reverts to the main theme. Such digressions are appropriate in the familiar style of essay, and often constitute a great part of its charm: they are, in Herrick's phrase, the "careless shoe-strings," the loosely flowing ribbons, the "neglected cuffs" of the essay, and the carelessness of their disposition may be more delightful to the reader than the carefulness of a more formal art.

A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbons to flow confusedly;
A winning wave, deserving note,
In the tempestuous petticoat;
A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
I see a wild civility;
Do more bewitch me, than when art
Is too precise in every part.

When the first general reading of an essay has been concluded, the pupils may be called upon to write a coherent and adequate description of the main theme. The following may be given as an example of this form of exercise:

"MY FIRST PLAY"

(From "The Essays of Elia.")

*Statement of the main theme and scope
of the essay.*

After introducing the reader to the pit entrance of old Drury, Elia comments on some personal foibles of his godfather F., who had sent the orders for the play. Returning to the main theme, he carries the reader within the theatre, and describes the glamour surrounding a child's first glimpse of the stage—"no such pleasure has since visited me but in dreams." He then calls to memory his second and third plays; and, in conclusion, refers to the feelings with which he visited the theatre in his later life.

This exercise may be followed by a second, the object of which should be to present a more detailed outline of the essay: the pupil being asked to write down in their order the themes of the successive paragraphs—in other words, to make a *précis* of the essay. The great value of this form of exercise is now generally recognised: the making of a good *précis* involves the qualities of refined discrimination and close concentration, a logical faculty of grasping the essential points in the development of a theme.

"MY FIRST PLAY"

(From "The Essays of Elia").

Paragraph-Précis.

- Par.* 1.—The reader is conducted to the pit-entrance of old Drury Lane.
- Par.* 2.—The associations of Elia's godfather F. (who had sent the orders) with the theatre.
- Par.* 3.—Foibles of F.
- Par.* 4.—Through a legacy from his godfather, Elia experiences the elation of a landed proprietor.
- Par.* 5.—Interior of the theatre: waiting for the play.
- Par.* 6.—"The play's the thing": recollections of "Artaxerxes."
- Par.* 7.—Elia's recollections of his second play—"The Lady of the Manor."
- Par.* 8.—Recollections of his third play—"The Way of the World."
- Par.* 9.—Changed impressions: after an interval of six or seven years, Elia returns to the theatre a rationalist.

It should be added that, while most of the essays studied in schools may appropriately be analyzed in this manner, yet there are some which are not naturally adapted for such a strict written analysis. Some of the finest examples of the personal essay are marked throughout by an *abandon* which it would be a folly to try to confine in the form of a *précis*: in these the

writer wanders fancy-free, from pole to pole of varied sentiment and idea, at the beck only of "random provocations." "We will have nothing said or done syllogistically this day," exclaims Elia in his essay on *All Fools' Day*, "remove those logical forms, waiter, that no gentleman break the tender shins of his apprehension stumbling across them"—in such cases it may be well that the teacher should for the nonce enact the part of Elia's waiter, and be mindful of his pupils' very tender shins.

When the written exercises complementary to the first reading have been done, the essay should be re-read—this time with a view to the study of linguistic and literary details. It may be read paragraph by paragraph: a pause being made at the end of each for such questions and explanations as may be deemed necessary.

The paragraph should first be considered as a whole. In prose composition as a rule, each paragraph is marked by unity of subject and treatment: it deals consistently with one main theme. In the essay, however, as we have seen, digressions frequently occur: not only are whole paragraphs found to diverge from the general theme of the essay, but, within the paragraphs, sentences diverge from the particular paragraph-themes. At the end of a paragraph, the pupil may be asked to say whether it is marked by unity or lack of unity. If he has previously noted the paragraph-theme, he will have no difficulty in answering correctly: when a paragraph contains statements that are not related to its theme, its unity is thereby broken. The connexion between the successive paragraphs should

also be observed. It may be explicit or implicit: it is explicit when one paragraph is linked to another by a special word or phrase—such as “thus,” “in the next place,” “we have now seen,” or by the repetition of a word from the preceding paragraph: examples of such linked paragraphs should be pointed out by the pupil.

The sentences forming the paragraph should next be studied. The range of details that may be here noted is wide, and there is need for considerable care in the selection of questions and explanations. It is essential, however, that the meaning of the sentences should be understood by the pupils, and to that end any obscure allusions should be made clear. The teacher may be guided in his questioning also by the relation of the essay-form to the study of composition. In ordinary prose writing, the sentence, like the paragraph, should be a unity, should treat of only one subject: if it deals with more than one, it is apt to be involved in construction and obscure in meaning. In some cases, however, the want of unity in a sentence may not be a fault, and involution and obscurity may be designed to produce a distinct literary effect. Instances of want of unity in sentences may be pointed out by the pupil. The general character of the sentences, as shown through particular instances, may also be commented upon: notice may be taken of exceptionally long or short sentences and their structure as loose or periodic; and of balanced, antithetical, epigrammatic, exclamatory, or interrogative sentences: special emphasis being laid on the mental effects produced by these usages.

The words contained in the sentences may then be studied: the uses of unusual or obsolete words, technical

terms, foreign words, should be noticed. The derivations of words should be made known when they impart shades of meaning which would otherwise escape observation. An important distinction in words, from the writer's point of view, is that between specific and general terms: both are necessary in every form of composition, but while the former produce a more vivid effect, and are found most frequently in descriptive and narrative essays, the latter are expressive of abstract ideas, and are especially useful in the treatment of expository and reflective themes.

After the detailed reading of the essay, if it be held desirable, written exercises of a revisional and summary nature may be set. One exercise might deal with the sentences of the essay, the pupils being asked to write down (perhaps in tabular form) the particular features that had been remarked; or, in the case of the older pupils, a more general statement might be required. For example:

"MY FIRST PLAY"

(From "The Essays of Elia").

Notes on the Sentences.

The length of the sentences in this essay is effectively varied: there is a mixture of long and short sentences of average length. The short sentences in the following passage express well the sudden arrest of Elia's young consciousness when the bell rings and the curtain rises:

"The orchestra lights at length arose, those 'fair Auroras!' Once the bell sounded. It was to

ring out once again—and, incapable of the anticipation, I reposed my shut eyes in a sort of resignation upon the maternal lap. It rang the second time. The curtain drew up—I was not past six years old—and the play was ‘Artaxerxes’!”

A similar effect is produced in these sentences, descriptive of Elia’s feelings after the curtain has risen :

“All feeling was absorbed in vision. Gorgeous vests, gardens, palaces, princesses, passed before me. I knew not players....”

The following is an instance of a long sentence :

“He is dead—and thus much I thought due to his memory, both for my first orders (little wondrous talismans!—slight keys, and insignificant to outward sight, but opening to me more than Arabian paradises!) and moreover, that by his testamentary beneficence I came into possession of the only landed property which I could ever call my own—situate near the roadway village of pleasant Puckeridge, in Hertfordshire.”

The above quotation illustrates another feature of many of the sentences : their lack of strict unity ; and connected with this is the use of parentheses and exclamations, which occur frequently throughout the essay. Here is a characteristic sentence :

“The boxes at that time, full of well-dressed women of quality, projected over the pit ; and the pilasters reaching down were adorned with a glistening substance (I know not what) under glass (as it seemed), resembling—a homely fancy—but I judged it to be sugar-candy—yet, to my raised imagination, divested of its homelier qualities, it appeared a glorified candy!”

Antithesis and balance and epigram are occasionally found, but they are not prominent features: the following passage may be cited :

"I expected the same feelings to come again with the same occasion. But we differ from ourselves less at sixty and sixteen, than the latter does from six. In that interval what had I not lost ! At the first period I knew nothing, understood nothing, discriminated nothing. I felt all, loved all, wondered all—

Was nourished, I could not tell how—

I had left the temple a devotee, and was returned a rationalist. The same things were there materially; but the emblem, the reference, was gone !"

Exercises may also be set on the allusions, quotations, and words contained in the essay. For example :

"MY FIRST PLAY."

Allusions and Quotations.

- Par. 1.* Garrick's Drury.
- Par. 2.* Sheridan. Maria Linley.
- Par. 3.* Ciceronian. Seneca. Varro. "The parochial honours of St Andrew's."
- Par. 4.* "Wondrous talismans !—slight keys, but opening to me more than Arabian paradises !"
- Par. 5.* "The plate prefixed to Troilus and Cressida, in Rowe's Shakespeare—the tent scene with Diomedes." Those "fair Auroras" (an expression found in the first song in "Artaxerxes").
- Par. 6.* Darius. Persepolis. Harlequin's Invasion. The legend of St Denia.

- Par. 7.* "The Lady of the Manor." Rich.
Par. 8. "The Way of the World." The old Round Church of the Templars.
Par. 9. "Was nourished, I could not tell how" (probably an echo from Walton's *Complete Angler*). Mrs Siddons.

An explanatory note may be added after each allusion or quotation.

"MY FIRST PLAY."

Notes on the Words.

1. *Unfamiliar Words*¹.—prognosticate, grandiloquent, betwixt (*archaic*), pilasters, beshrew (*archaic*), nonpareils, inhibited, beldams, pantaloony.

2. *Words used in an unusual connexion*¹.—"He arrived with his harmonious charge"; "these distorted syllables"; "nothing but an agrarian can restore it"; "monosyllabically elaborated"; "by his testamentary beneficence"; "beshrew the uncomfortable manager"; "to my raised imagination"; "upon a new stock"; "I was returned a rationalist"; "the primeval Motley"; "like some solemn tragic passion."

3. *Grammatical Peculiarities*.—"that by his testamentary beneficence" &c. ("that" = because). "situate" (= situated). "an indispensable playhouse accompaniment in those days" (*playhouse*, noun used as adjective). "fruiteresses" (uncommon feminine form).

4. *Specific and general terms*.—The last sentences illustrate the use of general terms: e.g.

¹ Derivations may be appended in some cases.

“Comparison and retrospection soon yielded to the present attraction of the scene; and the theatre became to me, upon a new stock, the most delightful of recreations.”

Finally, an exercise may be required which shall deal more generally with the essential spirit and style of the essay. This is a difficult exercise, and may be set only in the highest classes; but in every case the teacher himself should have previously studied the essay from the point of view here indicated: he will thereby gain valuable direction for his teaching. In the case of Lamb's essay on “My First Play,” the exercise might take some such form as the following:

“*MY FIRST PLAY.*”

Spirit and Style.

The essay is suffused throughout by an intimately personal spirit; it reveals to us the author both in his inner and his outer life: in his thoughts, fancies, and sentiments, and in his outward circumstances and social relationships. We have a glimpse of him first as a child, on a rainy afternoon in London, looking through the window at the rain splashing in the street. We see him then in the theatre, awaiting, with “breathless anticipations” and “raised imagination,” the forthcoming spectacle, or rapt in the contemplation of the scenes and characters of the play. We are introduced by the way to his parents, as they sit at cards—“over a quadrille table”; and to them—post-haste from elopement—young Brinsley Sheridan enters with his bride. We smile at the oddities of the godfather, and of Elia

himself, in his rôle of landed proprietor, striding—shall he confess the vanity?—with larger paces over his allotment of three quarters of an acre.

The structural form of the essay expresses appropriately its intimately personal spirit. The theme is not developed systematically or logically. The title of itself, considered in relation to the substance of the essay, shows this: it promises some account of Elia's first play, but the actual subject-matter concerns not only the first, but the second, third, and later plays seen by the author. The second and third paragraphs digress from the main theme; and the course of the essay throughout resembles more the wayward flow of a familiar conversation than the studied development of a given theme.

The style of the essay is in harmony with the subject-matter and structural form. It is highly individual and characteristic. It possesses a strong savour of quaint humour, which makes itself felt partly through the use of uncommon but quaintly expressive conjunctions of words. Regarded generally, the style reflects qualities of the heart rather than of the intellect: it is stamped by a sympathetic humour and loving humanity, rather than by a sharp wit or penetrating intellect: hence some of the more purely intellectual features of style—such as antithesis, balance, and epigram—are not prominent in the essay.

It is a good plan to read the essays of several different writers consecutively, with a view to comparison and contrast. For instance, after an essay of Lamb's, one of Addison's might be studied. No. 335 of *The Spectator*, in which Addison describes Sir Roger de

Coverley's visit to the theatre, may be compared with Elia's essay on "My First Play." Here we have two essays dealing with similar subjects in similar styles. In one we read of the impressions of an unsophisticated old man—old in years, but young in heart and feeling, at the performance of a play; in the other we read of the impressions of an unsophisticated imaginative child. Both belong to the class of "familiar essays," but Addison's is differentiated from Lamb's in that, while it is not so intimately personal in tone, it has a superadded dramatic interest. No. 93 of *The Spectator*, again, may be contrasted with the essay on "My First Play." Here we have two essays dealing with entirely different subjects in different styles. Addison's paper in *The Spectator* deals with an abstract theme, "On Proper Methods of Employing Time," and is an example of the didactic essay. Its style may be contrasted to excellent effect with that of "My First Play": while the latter is suffused with feeling, the former is marked rather by intellectual qualities. Each of Addison's paragraphs forms a unity within itself, and many of them are explicitly linked to the preceding paragraph: it may be added that this mode of junction, superimposed by the intellect for the sake of greater clearness and more exact sequence, is more mechanical in kind than the fusion of paragraph to paragraph in the natural flow of feeling and thought, moving independently of external aids. Addison's sentences are marked by unity and clearness, and their most conspicuous feature is the extensive use of antithesis, balance, and epigram. The first sentences of the essay are characteristic: "We all of us complain

of the shortness of time, saith Seneca, and yet have much more than we know what to do with. Our lives, says he, are spent either in doing nothing at all, or in doing nothing to the purpose, or in doing nothing that we ought to do. We are always complaining our days are few, and acting as though there would be no end of them." The words in Addison's essay are well-chosen and appropriately used; they are mostly words in common use, and have not the recondite quality of the vocabulary in Lamb's essay¹.

¹ Teachers will find in the undernoted volume (now in the press) material adapted to the application of the comparative method and of the general method of study indicated in this chapter:—*Prose Essays, arranged for Comparative Study, with Notes and Exercises*, by W. Macpherson, M.A. (Blackie and Son).

X

CHAPTER V.

THE STUDY OF LYRIC POETRY.

IT may be claimed as one of the advantages appertaining to the study of lyric poetry that through it as medium the importance of the element of structure in literature may be taught more easily than through any other literary form. The first lesson a pupil has to learn regarding structure is that a work of literary art should be pervaded by a certain unity: underlying all its details there must be implicitly present a central unity of feeling or thought and a corresponding harmony of atmosphere. It is the merit of a lyric poem, in this connexion, as compared with other forms of literature, that in it the reader may more easily perceive the central unity of its theme. This advantage lyric poetry possesses, in the first place, because it is, compared with other literary forms, brief in its expression, and is less overlaid with details; and secondly, because from its essential nature it aims at impressing on the reader's consciousness some single vivid idea or emotion—thus we find Mr Palgrave remarking in his preface to *The Golden Treasury* (*First*

Series) that "‘lyrical’ has been here held essentially to imply that each poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling, or situation." It is true, of course, that in every work of literary art, whatever be its kind, there must be amid a varying multiplicity of detail an underlying unity; and just in proportion as the perusal of the whole work produces this effect of unity is the work great as a product of art. Hence, in the higher stages of literature teaching, in all cases the structure of the literary works that are read will form an object of study. For example, it will be a valuable exercise for pupils who are reading a play of Shakespeare to trace the unity of plan, and the progressive development of that unity, throughout the play. Such an exercise, however, in the case of a drama will be a task of much greater difficulty and complexity than is involved in examining the structure of a lyric poem. A remark made by Mr Pater in his essay on "Shakespeare's English Kings¹" illustrates this point admirably. Lyric poetry, he says, "in spite of complex structure, often preserves the unity of a single passionate ejaculation"; whereas, in dramatic poetry, "especially to the reader, as distinguished from the spectator assisting at a theatrical performance, there must always be a sense of the effort necessary to keep the various parts from flying asunder, a sense of imperfect continuity." Mr Pater is here speaking of the difficulty which the adult reader finds in preserving the sense of unity amid the multiplicity of detail of a drama; and for the schoolboy the difficulty is much greater. The same difficulty, though in a lesser degree,

¹ *Appreciations: with an Essay on Style.* Macmillan.

will be met in the class-reading of a novel. It is only when we come to the lyric that the study of structure can be effectively carried on with an appreciably less degree of effort; and the reason is that here we have a form of literature the content of which may at one reading be grasped as a whole and included in one view. In a short space of time, in the course of a single lesson, a complete product of literary art may be studied and the interrelation of its different parts clearly shown. It may be claimed, then, for lyric poetry that it is a form of literature peculiarly well adapted as an instrument for first introducing the pupil to the study of structure and its importance as an element in literary art.

So far we have been speaking of structure exclusively in its relation to the subject-matter of literature, in its signification as thought structure. It is impossible, however, in considering any work of art, to make an absolute separation between the subject-matter expressed and the manner of its expression. And in lyric poetry this is pre-eminently the case. The characteristic of a lyric is that in it not only the matter—the particular feeling or idea expressed—but also the manner—the mode of combination of words and phrases and sentences, the metrical structure, the sound and cadence of the verse—should proceed directly and intimately from the personality of the author: in it there should be a complete fusion between the writer's personality and his subject alike on the side of its matter and of its manner, each of which is to be regarded as but an aspect of the other. For this reason the relations that subsist between these two

sides of literary art, the matter and the manner, are more intimate, and may be more easily demonstrated, in the case of a lyric poem than in any other poetic form. As lyric poetry is now, on the side of its subject-matter, an instrument of many strings, expressive of all kinds of sentiment and thought, such an instrument is it too in the variety of its modes of expression: corresponding with the variety of the themes that it sounds there is a similar variety of metre and movement. Than lyric poetry, therefore, as represented in any of the many good anthologies now available, the teacher will find no better medium for impressing upon the pupil a sense of the intimate relation that subsists in literature between the matter expressed and the manner of its expression: for instance, in the reading of an anthology there will occur innumerable opportunities for explaining such points as the use and value in poetry, as formal aids to the expression of the subject-matter, of assonance, of onomatopœia, of alliteration, or the characteristic effects that are produced in particular poems by the employment of certain metres, and in a single poem by variations of metre within itself. And in drawing attention to these points the teacher will frequently employ the method of comparison. Obvious differences in theme between two or more lyrics will lead to the observation of corresponding differences in sound and metre and movement, and the number of lyrics that may be studied within a short time makes possible a wide comparison of different types.

The reference that has just been made to the comparative method leads naturally to the consideration of a further point that defines the distinctive place of

lyric poetry in the teaching of English literature. Lyric poems may be compared not only individually with one another, from the standpoint of their matter and of their manner, but also as falling into certain groups according to the periods in which they were written. The use of an anthology as a text-book ought to help us in our teaching of the history of literature. In the course of three or four terms' work an adequate selection of lyrics ranging from the Elizabethan period to our own, written by many different authors, and showing a wide variety of style, may be read—affording opportunities for the study of biographical and critical details concerning the authors, and for drawing comparisons between the different tendencies that have marked our literature at different epochs of its development. The usefulness of the anthology in this respect is suggested by Mr Palgrave in his preface to *The Golden Treasury (First Series)*, where he tells us that “the poems have been distributed into Books corresponding (1) to the ninety years closing about 1616, (2) thence to 1700, (3) to 1800, (4) to the half century just ended. Or, looking at the poets who more or less give each portion its distinctive character, they might be called the Books of Shakespeare, Milton, Gray, and Wordsworth. The volume in this respect, so far as the limitations of its range allow, accurately reflects the natural growth and evolution of our Poetry.” We have only to read Mr Palgrave's short but highly suggestive “Summaries” to perceive how easily the study of lyric poetry allies itself to the historical study of our literature.

But against this plan of using an anthology as a

means of correlating the teaching of literature with the teaching of literary history the objection may be urged that the chronological order in which the poems are given and the degree of difficulty which they present to the pupil do not correspond.

In reply to this objection, it may be admitted at once that, if an anthology is used as a means of illustrating the historical development of our literature, the poems that it includes must be read in chronological order; and it may be admitted, too, that in *The Golden Treasury*, for example, many of the lyrics given in the first part of the book are just those that are likely to present most difficulties to young pupils. Nevertheless, even in the First Book of the *Treasury*, there will be found many simple lyrics which may be understood and rightly appreciated by young pupils—such poems as Nos. 5, 15, 24, 27, 34, 42, 46, 47, 50, 51, 54. The teacher who uses *The Golden Treasury* as a text-book may use his discretion in selecting from each Book poems adapted to the age of his pupils; and, still preserving the chronological order, he may, if he will, combine the reading of the selected poems with the teaching of literary history. In a second review of the book the more difficult numbers may be read, and the correlated teaching of literary history will be elaborated.

As a further reply to the objection under consideration, it may be added that there are certain anthologies which, while preserving the arrangement in chronological order, yet give only such poems as are suitable for young readers. Such an anthology is the *Lyra Heroica*, edited by the late Mr W. E. Henley.

Another similar collection (which includes within its scope, however, poems other than those purely lyrical) is to be found in the *English Poetry for the Young*, edited by Mr S. E. Winbolt. This latter volume the writer has used with classes of boys of the average age of thirteen or fourteen, and through it has correlated quite effectively the reading of poetry with the teaching of literary history. On the other hand, with a class of pupil-teachers of the average age of seventeen or eighteen the writer has used *The Golden Treasury* as a text-book, taking the poems in the order in which they are given: and the results have been equally satisfactory.

Such are the chief considerations that seem to justify the claim that at a certain stage of the curriculum lyric poetry possesses a distinctive value as a medium for the teaching of English literature; and these considerations determine the particular methods that should be employed in using an anthology in class. In the remainder of this chapter it is proposed to describe briefly a method that may be used in the treatment of individual lyric poems. Since the lessons described deal with individual poems, the general question of correlating the teaching with instruction in literary history will not be considered. As an example of the method applied to the study of a short and simple poem, the unity of which is overlaid by little or no detail, take the case of a lesson dealing with Tennyson's "Bugle Song" in *The Princess*.

The teacher begins by calling upon one or two members of the class to read the poem aloud. He then asks: "What is the subject, the main theme, of

this lyric?" The pupils are required to give particular lines in support of their answers. The main theme, it is concluded, is the effect produced on a lover and his mistress by the echoing sounds of a bugle; the poem may be classed as a love lyric.

"In order that we may understand this more clearly," continues the teacher, "we shall read the poem again." The explanations that have just been given are such as will concentrate the pupils' attention, in this re-reading, upon the essential subject-matter of the poem.

The pupils now proceed, under the teacher's guidance, to trace in detail, verse by verse, the development of the main idea. The poem is written in three verses. The first conveys to us ideas of the place and time that are involved. The imagery of the first part of the verse is expressed in terms of the sense of sight. The last lines sound the main theme of the poem. In the second verse this keynote is further elaborated. Here the imagery is expressed in terms of the sense of hearing. The verse expresses the sound-effects of the echoes as they gradually recede, until at length, coming faintly from afar, they are like thin clear notes blown from fairy bugles. In the third verse the poet passes from the effects produced upon the outer senses, and suggests the more intimate feelings of the two listeners; the echoes faint and die, but always soul will speak to soul.

The poem having been thus read and explained verse by verse, it is re-read as a whole, after which the teacher may ask the pupils to supply such epithets as seem to them to describe appropriately the mood in

which it is written—adjectives such as “tender” and “dreamy” and “fanciful” suggest themselves. The attention of the class is then directed to the more formal aspects of the poem. Its movement is light and easy, and the music is characterised by grace and delicacy. Alliteration occurs in “snowy summits,” “the long light shakes across the lakes,” &c. The metre is chiefly iambic, but there is a variation in the last two lines of each stanza. What is the effect produced by this variation? Are there any imitative sounds in the poem? Show how the formal characteristics that have been mentioned are in harmony with, and aid in the expression of, the main theme and the mood of the lyric.

To illustrate further the application of this method to longer and more complex varieties of lyric poetry, let us now suppose a class to be studying Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*. Here, as before, the teacher's first object is to secure that the pupils should discover for themselves the main theme. The poem is therefore read as a whole (either at home or in class) and the subject is briefly stated.

The mode in which the general theme is developed through all the particular details has next to be studied. The subject may be said to unfold itself in two main aspects. In the first place, there is a gradual evolution of the theme from the standpoint of “local colour”—the categories of “here” and “now”; there runs throughout the poem a vein of sensuous imagery suggestive of place and time—the thronged streets of London, the booming of the cannon, the wail of the organ, the tears of the crowd, the last rites. In the

second place, there is a gradual evolution of the theme regarded from a less sensuous and more purely intellectual standpoint; the poet celebrates the Duke's achievements as a military leader, his high character as a patriot and a man, and the greatness of his soul. The poem may be divided structurally into four sections, each of which marks a development in these two aspects of its main theme. Stanzas 1 to 4 suggest to the reader the funeral procession passing through the crowded streets, and refer in general terms to the Duke's high character and great deeds. Stanza 5 suggests the arrival of the procession at St Paul's, "under the cross of gold that shines over city and river," and introduces the subject of Wellington's greatness as a soldier. Stanzas 6 to 8 suggest (by allusion only) the interior of the Cathedral, and elaborate the previously introduced theme of Wellington's military genius. The last stanza suggests the closing scene: "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and concludes with a reference to a life beyond.

After the first general reading and statement of the subject-matter, the poem will be re-read in sections as above, a pause being made at the end of each section to enable the pupils to trace in it the development of the theme in its two aspects. The attention of the class will be called specially to certain passages in which the two threads that run through the poem are seen to be connected with one another, as to the lines—

And the volleying cannon thunder his loss.
He knew their voices of old,

where, by a natural transition, the poet passes from the present place and time to the celebration of the

1800

Duke's great achievements on the battlefield. Again, in stanza 6, the allusive manner in which the interior of the Cathedral is suggested is worthy of note.

When, by such help as is above indicated, the structure of the *Ode* has taken shape, and its content has been enriched to fulness in the pupils' minds, the poem will then be treated from the formal point of view; and here considerable use may be made of the comparative method. If the "Bugle Song" has been read immediately before the *Ode* the teacher may ask for a comparison between the moods in which the two poems respectively are written. While the mood of the former was characterized as "tender" and "dreamy," that of the latter might be described as "earnest," "exalted," and "spiritual"; and, corresponding with this difference in mood, there are differences in the metrical features of the poems. The metre of the ode is more complex and irregular than that of the song. Its movement is not "light" and "graceful," but "dignified" and "solemn." The frequent recurrence of long vowels, the use of assonance, the repetition of words and phrases will also be noted: and it will be shown how these characteristics are in harmony with the main theme and the mood of the poem; here, as always in the study of poetry, such formal or metrical characteristics will be studied not as being in abstract separation from, but as being vitally connected with, the main subject-matter that is expressed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STUDY OF DRAMA.

IN the preceding chapters most of the particular methods that may be effectively applied in the teaching of English literature have been described and illustrated. These methods may be used with equal effect in the study of drama, and they need not be illustrated further with any detail. There are certain features, however, characteristic of the drama as a special form of art, which it is necessary that the teacher should consider. In order that he may guide his pupils aright, and know at what stage of the curriculum the study of drama may suitably be begun, he should have formed previously some idea of the essential nature of drama and dramatic effect.

The most important element in the drama is the plot or story. This truth was established, in relation to tragedy, as long ago as the time of Aristotle, who, in the *Poetics*, showed how, while the element of character is important in tragedy, it is yet subsidiary to the plot. "Most important of all," he says, "is the structure of the incidents. For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life....Dramatic

action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the action. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character....Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents.... The plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: character holds the second place¹." These remarks may be applied with equal force to comedy: true dramatic effect, whether tragical or comical in quality, arises out of the plot and situation.

Tragedy has for its characteristic subject the unsuccessful struggle of man against circumstances: "to be really tragic, it must represent irreparable collision between the individual and the general (in different degrees of generality). It is the individual with whom we sympathise, and the general of which we recognise the irresistible power²." The characteristic subject of comedy is essentially the same, regarded from an opposite point of view. While we sympathise with the individual in tragedy, we laugh at him in comedy. Underlying the collision which ends in

¹ Aristotle's *Poetics*, cap. 6, Mr S. H. Butcher's Translation, 1898.

² George Eliot, in her account of the origin and purpose of *The Spanish Gypsy*.

tragedy there may be traced the operation of elemental passions, of dim and incalculable forces beyond the sway of man; underlying the collision which results in comedy there are at work more human and calculable conditions, the pettier emotions and minor follies of man, as vanity or social pride. In some kinds of comedy, however, the more serious side of human nature and the deeper issues of life are also reflected, and this is especially the case in Shakespeare's comedies. No absolute distinction, indeed, can be drawn between the two forms of tragedy and comedy: their real subject is one and the same—each representing an inevitable collision between man and the existing social order.

It is a necessary feature alike of the tragic and the comic plot that this struggle between man and the social order should result in some change of fortune, either from good to bad, or bad to good. Drama must represent human nature in its "traverses of fortune¹"; and the most typical and effective of dramatic situations, alike in tragedy and in comedy, arises when a character adopts a certain course of action with a particular object in view, and finds that the result which follows is entirely different from what he had intended or anticipated. This is what Aristotle calls *περιπέτεια*, Reversal or Recoil of the Action, and he includes it as an essential element in a really tragic situation—it must be included as no less essential an element in the situations of comedy. Thus, in the *Electra* of Euripides, Aegisthus goes forth to the plain

¹ See Dryden's definition of drama, in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*: "Drama is a just and lively image of human nature, in its actions, passions, and traverses of fortune."

to do sacrifice to the Nymphs, intending to secure his house and person against the enmity of Orestes; and almost as he prays, Orestes smites him down with the very sword which had shorn the peace-offering. In *Hamlet*, again, the king and Laertes poison the foil, so that Hamlet may be killed in the fencing-match; and they are themselves slain by the poisoned weapon. In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio assumes the part of a lover, and is locked up as a madman; Sir Andrew Aguecheek boldly attacks Sebastian, judging him (from the previous behaviour of his "double" Viola) to be a coward, and emerges from the struggle himself disgraced. Alike in tragedy and in comedy, life is represented as a game of cross-purposes: the calculations of men are astray, and the effects they look for do not correspond with their expectations. The contrariness of life is reflected in the "irony" of the dramatist in a twofold manner—in the first place, when the actions that he depicts are followed by a result different from what had been intended by the actors, and again when the speeches that he puts into the mouths of his characters convey a truth unsuspected by the speakers. Examples of this irony underlying speech are numerous both in tragedy and in comedy. When Othello meets Desdemona in Cyprus, he exclaims, "If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy"—not recognising, in his ignorance of the future, the fulness of truth contained in his words. In *Richard II* the king, when opposed by Bolingbroke, expresses, in high-sounding phrases, his entire confidence in the success of his enterprise, while all the time the audience knows that the Welsh army on which his hopes rest has dispersed.

In *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* the humour of the scenes in which the disguised Rosalind and Viola appear is greatly heightened by the fact that, while the audience knows that they are girls, the characters on the stage believe them to be boys. The effect of dramatic irony, in all its manifestations, depends on a sense of contrast and surprise in the minds of the audience: when the circumstances are tragic, the sense of contrast is accompanied by pity or terror; when comic, the audience is moved to mirth. Drama aims at presenting a lively image of life itself; and as life plays with the ignorance of man, and is full of strange surprises and piquant or bitter contrasts, so is it too in drama. Along with the "Reversal of the Action" Aristotle includes what he calls ἀναγνώρισις ("Recognition") as an essential part of the Tragic Plot, and he defines this as "a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune¹." Understood in a broad sense, and as being at bottom forms of dramatic irony, depending upon surprises, both περιπέτεια and ἀναγνώρισις are essential elements alike of the Tragic and the Comic Plot.

An analysis of the nature of dramatic plot indicates to the teacher that the study of drama, as drama, presupposes a somewhat advanced stage of mental development on the part of the pupil. While the study of plot in fiction may be begun in the junior forms of schools, the study of dramatic plot should be deferred to the senior stages of the curriculum. On a superficial view, indeed, it might be supposed that the

¹ *Poetics*, xi. 2.

drama, since it deals essentially with action, an element in life which appeals strongly to the young, might be a form of literature especially suitable for study in schools. But in drama human action is regarded from a particular point of view which cannot be adequately grasped by the young. The compelling force of circumstances and the established social order, the subtler and deeper contrasts and surprises of reality, with which drama deals, cannot be rightly understood by them. Action is regarded and represented by the dramatist as being essentially conditioned by a mode of thought or feeling, and the conditioning mental states that underlie action in drama are frequently of a subtle or complicated kind. In the plot of fiction, on the other hand, the actions depicted need not necessarily be so conditioned: an effective and stirring romance may tell a tale of vigorous and gallant action into which the deeper and more refined phases of thought and feeling do not enter, and again, a novel may aim rather at the delineation of character or the exposition of dialogue than at the representation of action. The very limitations of stage-representation impose a corresponding limitation on the nature of the actions that are suitable for dramatic treatment. For instance, great material movements, or actions presupposing the presence of a large number of persons, cannot be adequately represented on the stage. Drury Lane melodrama may attempt, indeed, to reproduce a scene at a racecourse or the wreck of a great liner; but the resources even of Drury Lane are not sufficient to make these reproductions dramatically impressive. In true drama, actions are regarded by the dramatist

not from a purely objective standpoint, in and for themselves, or merely as spectacle, but in their relation to the mental states which condition or are conditioned by them. The murders in Greek tragedy are enacted off the stage; but the dramatist represents vividly the states of mind and the crises of thought and feeling which lead up to them. Shakespeare's dramatic power is shown in the representation not of such a material act as the murder of Desdemona, but of the mental agonies of Othello. Action in drama is thus much more deeply based on thought than is the case generally in fiction, and this circumstance indicates to the teacher that the study of drama as drama cannot effectively be begun before the age of 15 or 16. A play may be read by junior pupils for certain qualities that are not intrinsically dramatic—for its presentment of an interesting story or for the poetic beauty of detached passages, but its essentially dramatic qualities cannot be rightly appreciated.

An additional reason for deferring the consideration of drama is to be found in the circumstance that the study of structure, no less than that of plot, is here more difficult. The division of drama into scenes and acts makes it difficult to grasp the structure as a continuous whole. Yet it is essential that a pupil should be affected with this sense of unity and completeness in studying a play. The structure may be simple or complex: that is, it may be built along a single thread of interest, or with the main thread of the plot it may follow other minor threads; but in either case an essential feature of a well-constructed play is that it should affect the hearer or reader with

a sense of unity: every scene in a good play may be said to serve a definite purpose, as contributing to unity of impression. When the structure is complex, the different threads of the plot, while apparently diverting attention from the main theme, are connected with it in such a manner that really they emphasize its importance and interpret its meaning. An instance of this is found in the frequently occurring dramatic "fugue," in which an important situation in the main plot is reproduced, with variations, in an underplot. Thus, in *Hamlet*, the situation of Laertes, when he acts under the sense of a wrong done to his sister, corresponds with the situation of Hamlet, whose father has been wronged, and Hamlet's character is interpreted for us by the contrast between his and Laertes' behaviour in similar circumstances. Again, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio's wooing is paralleled by Gratiano's: both win their brides at the same time, both receive rings, and both give them away. Frequently, too, the threads in a complex plot are woven with a view, not to resemblance, but to contrast: for example, in *Twelfth Night*, side by side with the romance of the more serious plot, there runs the humorous byplay of the underplot. Always, however, in a well-constructed play, the threads of the plot are invented in such a manner as will contribute to the essential unity of impression that should be produced. The teacher's main object in the study of structure should be, negatively, to overcome and eradicate the disjointed impression which the division into scenes and acts is apt to convey, and, positively, to impress the pupil with a sense of unity. With a view to the attainment

of this object, after the first reading of a play, the pupils may be required to state briefly in writing the purpose or purposes of each scene in relation to one another and to the whole.

Closely connected with the study of the plot is the study of the characters. In drama generally, and in the great tragedies particularly, story and character are adapted to one another. The *Medea* of Euripides tells how a woman has been forsaken by her lover, who seeks to marry another; and the characters of the actors make the tragic collision of the drama inevitable. All Shakespeare's tragedies show an unerring harmony between story and character. In certain kinds of comedy, however,—as the comedy of intrigue—this correspondence is not so absolute: here the claims of the story are considered almost exclusively: the dramatist's sole preoccupation seems to be to secure that the movement and interest of the story should be sustained, and the characters are frequently made to act not consistently or probably, so as to produce the impression of real life, but merely in such a manner as will help towards the working out of the plot. Thus, in *Twelfth Night*, Orsino protests a changeless love for Olivia, but quite suddenly, and without apparent reason, transfers his affections to Viola. In the reading of plays like *Hamlet* or *Othello* a detailed consideration of the chief characters is necessary to the understanding of the story. In the reading of plays like *Twelfth Night*, on the other hand, where the character-drawing is for the most part not elaborate or carefully studied, it would be absurd to attempt to analyze the characters with great minuteness: most of them are merely

pieces on a board, to be used in working out the convenient solution in a particular game of comedy. In the study of character the teacher should always be guided by the relation of the characters to the main theme and central interest: the *dramatis personae* should not be studied as independent entities; and, in the case of dramas in which story and character are not adapted to one another, the study of character should not be forced. The following passage from Professor Raleigh's monograph on *Shakespeare* expresses admirably the point of view from which character in drama should be considered. "The critics," he says, "must needs be wiser than Shakespeare, and must finish his sketches for him, telling us more about his characters than ever he knew....They alter the focus, and force all things to illustrate this detail or that. They plead reverence for Shakespeare's omniscience, and pay a very poor compliment to his art. A play is like a piano; if it is tuned to one key, it is out of tune for every other. The popular saying which denies all significance to the play of *Hamlet* with the Prince of Denmark left out, shows a just sense of this. Yet the study of the lesser characters, conceived in relation, not to Hamlet, but to one another, continues to exercise the critics. The King in *Hamlet* is little better than a man of straw. He is sufficiently realized for Shakespeare's purpose; we see him through Hamlet's eyes, and share Hamlet's hatred of him....The analysis and illustration of Shakespeare's characters, considered separately, has had so long a vogue, and has produced work so memorable, that we are in some danger of forgetting how partial such a

method must be....We are lured further and further afield, until we find ourselves arguing on questions that have no meaning for criticism, and no existence save in dreams. It is well to go back to Shakespeare; and to remember the conditions imposed upon him, whether by the story of his choice, or by the necessities of dramatic presentment¹."

In the study of drama generally, the most important objects of consideration are plot, structure, and character, each of which should be regarded as combining to produce a particular dramatic effect. The diction and style of a play, however, must also receive consideration; and in the case of Shakespeare's plays, when older pupils are concerned, this part of the work may be made to produce especially valuable results. From a philological point of view, the history of our vocabulary and grammar is illustrated; and from a more purely literary point of view, the richness and flexibility of the English language, and its power of expressing the subtler shades of consciousness, are nowhere so conspicuously shown as in Shakespeare's plays. In them, too, our pupils may study the nature of blank verse and its variations as a medium for dramatic and poetic expression. The consideration of the sources of the plots, and their treatment by Shakespeare, furnishes a suitable introduction to an aspect of literary study which should be included in any complete curriculum; and the consideration of Shakespearean criticism and bibliography may be made to form an introduction to the principles of criticism and biblio-

¹ *Shakespeare*. By Walter Raleigh. London: Macmillan & Co., 1907. Pages 153—6.

graphy generally. All these branches of Shakesperean study should of course be undertaken only in the senior classes, with pupils of the age of 17 or 18, and they should not be regarded as objects of study for their own sake exclusively, but rather as adding to our conception of the artistic qualities and greatness of the plays. Finally, the study of Shakespeare should also be comparative: our pupils should compare particular plays or groups of plays, and trace the growth of his mind and art.

Nor should the dramatic study of our pupils be confined to Shakespeare. The numerous grammatical and linguistic difficulties that are found in his plays tend to distract the minds of young pupils from the essential sense of dramatic effect; and it may be held therefore that the study of drama may more conveniently begin with a play of later date, the language of which would not present so many difficulties. At a later stage, too, after the study of one or more of Shakespeare's plays, there should certainly be included in the course the study, in a good English translation, of one or more of the great Greek tragedies. No other dramas are so well fitted to impress the reader or hearer with a right sense of dramatic effect. The Greek tragic writers were restricted in their themes to certain current legends, but their subjects were characteristically tragic. And again, many of the artistic laws which Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides observed are not arbitrary and of limited application, but essential to the nature of true drama generally. Greek tragedy is marked by simplicity of plot, severity of structure, and adaptation of story and character: in it

the unity of impression which drama should convey is not blurred by the presentation of subsidiary details, and we are enabled the more easily to perceive the dramatic point of the story. As a means whereby our pupils may appreciate better the qualities of Shakesperean drama, no more effective plan could be devised than the successive reading of a Greek and of a Shakesperean tragedy. Euripides's *Electra* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* suggest themselves as suitable plays for this purpose. The two plays resemble one another in subject, but differ widely in treatment. In the *Electra* the unities of time and place are observed, and there is also unity of impression; in *Hamlet* the unities of time and place are broken, but the essential unity of impression is preserved amid all the diversity of the plot and tone and characterization. A wider reading and comparison of Greek and Shakesperean drama should help our pupils to realize more vividly the imperial scope of Shakespeare's genius: his sympathy with and zest for life in all its aspects, grave and gay, and his infinitely varied power of dramatic presentment.

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